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The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield. By GEORGE EARLE BUCKLE, in succession to W. F. MONYPENNY. Volume IV., 1855-1868. (New York: The Macmillan Company. 1916. Pp. x, 610.)

FOUR volumes of the Monypenny-Buckle *Life of Disraeli* have now been issued. A fifth volume is in the press. As a complete work it will be the longest and most detailed biography of any English statesman. It is not conceivable, however, that there will be much criticism of its length. Its fascination will carry its great volume and its personal and political detail. Its fascination, in fact, will be abiding; for since the office of prime minister was first developed in the British constitution, it has never been held by any man to whom a greater or more continuing interest attached than attaches to the man whom the English-speaking world likes to recall as Disraeli rather than as the Earl of Beaconsfield.

In bringing about legislation, or pre-eminent service in carrying the country through a great crisis, there are three or four premiers of the nineteenth century to whom much more must be credited than can even be claimed for Disraeli. Grey, Peel, and Gladstone all left a much greater impress on the statute book. The same can be said of Pitt, especially as regards his Irish legislation and the union of Ireland with Great Britain. Pitt also confronted a world crisis as great as that of 1914-1916. Should Mr. Asquith continue as premier to the end of the war, his services both as regards epoch-making legislation and guiding the empire through a great crisis, will be incomparably greater than those of Disraeli—the first Conservative premier who was drawn neither from the territorial governing class nor from the Inns of Court.

Only two great statutes—the parliamentary reform act of 1867 and the statute in which is embodied the democratic constitution of the Dominion of Canada—stand to the credit of Derby and Disraeli and the Conservative party in the period from the Peelite division of 1846 to the end of Derby's administration in February, 1868. Nor can much more legislation of first-class importance be credited to Disraeli during his second premiership from 1874 to 1880. Disraeli's outstanding service—the service to England on which his fame must rest—was, in fact, not in the realm of legislation, although he will always be remembered for his success in persuading a Conservative cabinet to accept household suffrage as the basis of the reform act of 1867; for his active and conspicuous part in carrying the reform bill through the House of Commons; and for ensuring it the support of the Conservatives in the House of Lords. His pre-eminent service to a country with parliamentary institutions, worked on party principles, was in rehabilitating, reorganizing, and greatly widening the base of the Conservative party, and giving it a national character—lifting it out of the disorganization and impotency which had characterized it from the end of the Wellington administra-

tion in 1828 to the incoming of the third Derby administration in June, 1866.

Mr. Buckle's new volume covers the years from 1855 to 1868—from the incoming of Palmerston's administration in February, 1855, to the resignation as premier of the Earl of Derby in February, 1868, and Disraeli's succession to that office. Each of the three earlier volumes—I. and II. written by the late Mr. Monypenny, and volume III. by Mr. Buckle—has its own peculiar interest; for there was no monotony or uniformity in the first thirty years of Disraeli's public career. His early life was quite unlike the earlier career of any other man who achieved fame at Westminster in the first seventy-five years of the nineteenth century; for Disraeli was of no university; his only source of income was his pen; and unlike Pitt or Gladstone he never had a patron who could help him to a seat in the House of Commons.

Each of the preceding volumes, as has been said, has its peculiar interest, because of the period of Disraeli's variegated career that it unfolds. But were a student of English political history, or a lover of biography, starting on a vacation, and desirous to take with him a single volume of this detailed biography, his choice would assuredly fall on volume IV. It would fall on this volume because it covers the period of Disraeli's greatest achievement.

Half-way through this period—certainly by 1861—Queen Victoria had quite overcome the prejudices she had once entertained against Disraeli, due to some bounder-like episodes, political and social, in his earlier career. "A better knowledge of Disraeli's character", writes Mr. Buckle, in commenting on the fact that in January, 1861, both Disraeli and his wife, although Disraeli was then in opposition in the House of Commons, had been invited to Windsor, "had overcome the distrust of the Court before the Prince's death; but it was the sympathetic and appreciative manner in which Disraeli treated that tragic event that converted the Queen's somewhat negative feeling towards him into friendly interest, which was ultimately to develop, during his great ministry, into unbounded and even affectionate confidence." Disraeli, all through his life, always served out flattery adroitly and in overflowing measure. He once told Stanley, Derby's eldest son, that he was convinced that he would "turn out a regular Chatham", and he also told Stafford Northcote that he was a Hyde. The correspondence in this volume is often stamped with this characteristic; but in none of the letters is the strain of flattery more continuous or more obvious than in his letters to Queen Victoria. It is an oft-told story that the queen stood aloof from Gladstone, because he treated her as an institution; while she was friendly to Disraeli because he treated her as a woman. Queen Victoria's own letters, as published in 1907, show that she could be as sentimental as any middle-class matron of her era. Disraeli's letters to the queen of 1855–1868, as well as those of an earlier period, make it certain that he fully realized this trait in the queen's character, and turned the realization to account.

But no one will criticize Disraeli over-much for his use of flattery with the queen and elsewhere. From 1846 to 1868 he was confronted with the most stupendous task that was ever the lot of the leader of a political party at Westminster; and this task—that of galvanizing the Conservative party into life and rendering it such as could serve the country efficiently, either in opposition or in office—was all the more difficult because of the political and social obstacles, peculiar to him, that he had to overcome. In the history of English political parties there is no chapter that is quite so interesting as Disraeli's struggle to this end from 1846 to 1868. Even the chapter in the history of the Liberal party from 1886 to 1906—the chapter that extends from the defeat of Gladstone and the home rule Liberals in 1886 to the triumphant sweep of the constituencies by the Liberals under Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith, and Lloyd George in 1906—does not exceed in vividness and continuity of interest the chapter in the history of the Conservative party from the division of the party over Peel's fiscal policy of 1846 to Disraeli's triumph with the parliamentary reform bill of 1867.

In writing this history from 1855 to 1868 it was not difficult for Mr. Buckle to keep Disraeli in the forefront of the picture. Disraeli was the man who was engineering the upbuilding of the Conservative party; and he was almost the only man really intent on this undertaking. Derby was his colleague in the task. He was his leader; and in these years Disraeli was nearly as deferential to Derby as he was to the queen. As yet there is no adequate biography of Derby; but as he is revealed in Mr. Buckle's pages, it is made evident that, had Disraeli not been his first lieutenant in these twelve or thirteen years, Derby could never have recreated the Conservative party, and thus given the Conservatives their term in office from 1874 to 1880, and again, with a break of only three years, from 1886 to 1905.

Malmesbury, Derby's colleague in the leadership of the Conservative party in the House of Lords, was even less well fitted than Derby for the undertaking for which Disraeli at this time was devoting his life; and from 1855 to 1868, practically from 1846 to 1868, the Conservative party, except for here and there a political lawyer intent on spoils, was more barren of men of ability in the House of Commons than at any period of its history from the reign of George II. to the outbreak of the Great War and the disappearance of party lines in 1914. Disraeli had accomplished his great task just as soon as the royal assent had been given to the act of 1867, which established household suffrage as the basis of the parliamentary franchise. This is the greatest measure with which Disraeli's name is associated. It is his greatest parliamentary achievement. As is appropriate to the part that Disraeli had in its framing and enactment, and to its tremendous influence on the fortunes of the Conservative party, Mr. Buckle goes into much detail concerning the bill, particularly as to the changes it underwent in the House of Commons. He brings out the part that Queen Victoria had in moulding the larger lines

of the measure; what Disraeli contributed to its success; what the bill cost Derby and Disraeli in defections from the ministry; and also what was contributed by the Liberals and the Radicals to the bill from which the modern Conservative party can with appropriateness date its origin.

Mr. Buckle draws on all the memoirs of the statesmen of that era for the material for these chapters. All this material is exceedingly well handled; with the result that the best, most complete, and most informing history of the reform act of 1867—of “the leap in the dark”—is now to be found, not in monographs on parliamentary reform, but in volume IV. of the Disraeli biography.

It must have been comparatively easy for both the late Mr. Monypenny and for Mr. Buckle in preparing the life of Disraeli to write a biography which should stand out among the biographies of English statesmen. Disraeli's origin, his character, and his peculiar and outstanding achievements, made it easily possible to produce such a work. Why the *Disraeli Life* stands out in the enormous library of British political biography has been indicated in this note and in the notes on the earlier volumes. But there is one other reason for its distinction that has yet to be stated. It is more than a life of Disraeli. From 1858 the book tells the story of the life of Mrs. Disraeli; and Mr. Buckle, largely by the extent to which he has drawn upon letters, has given us an admirable picture of the home life of the Disraelis and of Mrs. Disraeli's part in her husband's political career. Mrs. Gladstone is the only wife of an English statesman of front rank who has been as fortunate as Mrs. Disraeli as regards her husband's biographer.

EDWARD PORRITT.

Delane of the Times. By Sir EDWARD COOK. [Makers of the Nineteenth Century, edited by Basil Williams.] (New York: Henry Holt and Company. 1916. Pp. xi, 319.)

DASENT's *Life* of Delane and Atkins's biography of William Howard Russell have been, heretofore, the principal works exhibiting the personality and influence of the man who for thirty-six years (1841-1877) was the “great editor” of the *Times*. Undoubtedly a more vivid impression of the man is received from the earlier works, than from the present one, but not so clear a statement and analysis of his position, policies, and influence. Dasent, unintentionally, leaves the impression that Delane was a tuft-hunter. The present author, Sir Edward Cook, shows, rather, that Delane, socially acceptable in the “highest circles”, received there the hints which made the *Times* not merely a record, but a forecast of events. Especially was Delane at home in political circles, never permanently allying the *Times* with any party or minister, but usually giving support to the incoming administration, and continuing it until signs of political change manifested themselves—when the *Times* often shifted to attack. Delane saw no inconsistency in this; he held that the *Times* should represent the people of England, and that the